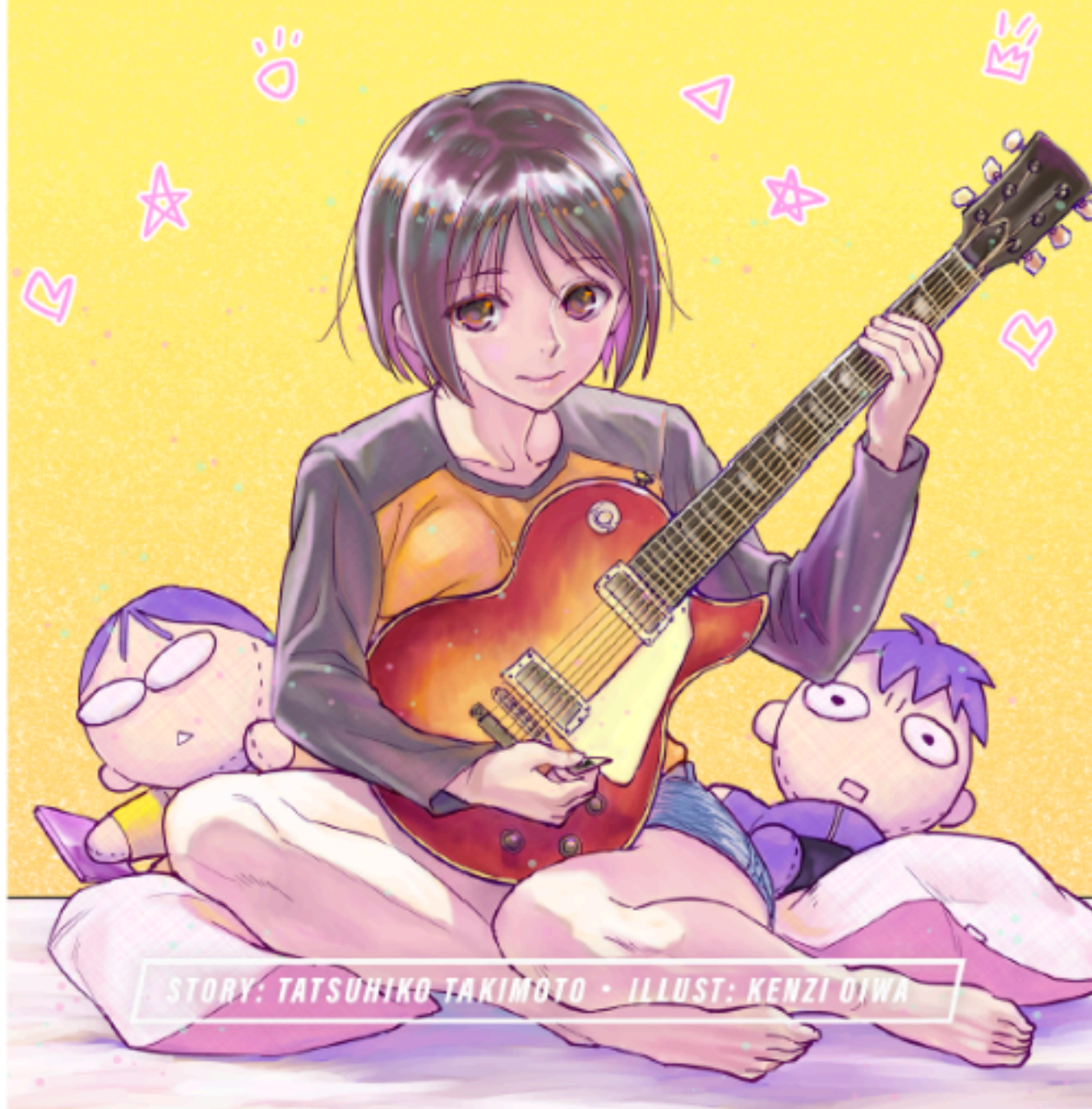


REBUILD of NIKIKUMUNINIKIKUMUNINIKIKUMUNINIKIKUMUNI

WELCOME TO THE NHK!

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STORY: TATSUHIKO TAKIMOTO • ILLUSTRATION: KENZI OJWA

The existence of the evil organization of "NHK", I happened to find it. All the reasons why I dropped out from the university, being unemployed and "Nikikomori" - homicidal young person - are due to NHK's conspiracy. I'll keep fighting till the day I will beat the vice organization. But one day, an assassin from a religious group show up to kill me. She is a neat and beautiful girl, Misaki-chan, with a parasol. Who is she? What can save our future contaminated with eroticism, violence, and drug? Love, courage or friendship? This is an ultimate Nikikomori sequel!



STORY

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The existence of the evil organization of "RRR" happened to find it. All the reasons why I dropped out from the university, being unemployed and "Rikikomori" - homicidal young person - are due to RRR's conspiracy. I'll keep fighting till the day I will beat the vice organization. But one day, an assassin from a religious group show up to kill me. She is a neat and beautiful girl, Misaki-chan, with a parasol. Who is she? What can save our future contaminated with eraticism, violence, and drug? Love, courage or friendship? This is an ultimate Rikikomori sequel!

To begin with, this girl was currently a truant. Even if I dropped out two years ago, I'm the one who made it to college here. Just what the hell kind of advice could she give me?

Her next words caught my eye.

"Today, in front of the station, some guy approached me."

From the damp futon, my body rose immediately.

Misaki-chan started explaining with her eyes distant.

"Um, so....."

It seems just now, she was wandering around the used bookstore in front of the station, looking for books related to recovering hikikomori. This average looking guy in his thirties suddenly called out at her.

In other words..... he hit on her.

"It surprised me, having a complete stranger talk to me."

"D- Did you end up talking to the guy?"

"No. He scared me, so I ran away."

"I... I see....."

"Were you worried?"

Misaki-chan put her hands behind her waist, leaning over looking at me.

"N- No..... I mean, you were just talking to someone..... Out of the blue like that though, he must have really had a screw loose"

"Hm. So you were worried."

"N- Not really....."

"Well, it's fine. Anyway, going through that inspired me. I have an exercise to train you to be a proper human being!"

“Let me tell you now, I’m not hitting on girls or talking to strangers.”

“Yeah, I know. That’d be impossible for you, Satou-kun. But because of what happened today, I figured out a revolutionary way to help you recover! It’s something that even you could do!”

She bent over further looking at me.

I had no choice but to follow.

“I got you. So tell me. Just what are you thinking?”

“If you want to know so bad, let me tell you.”

Misaki-chan took out her secret notebook from her bag and went into lecture mode.

“Alright..... In general, hikikomori are afraid of communication with people they meet for the first time. However, living is a continuous chain of encounters. How well you can interact with others determines your quality of life. Don’t you agree?”

“Well, I guess so.”

I recalled all the chances I had to interact with people in my life.

If converted it to mass, middle school through college, I wasted 5 tons of conversation chances and tossed them away.

No, it’s not just chances in the past. Even now, I continue to keep wasting them.

“.....”

For example, right..... Not just in real life, but I have trouble interacting with people online. On that YouTube channel I started recently with Yamazaki, we received our first comment. However, a week has passed and I’m still worrying about how to respond. There’s no doubt we lost our precious viewer.

“Get it, Satou-kun? No matter what the field, spontaneous communication is important. Right now, there’s no way you can survive in this world.”

“.....”

I stared at my hand driven by anxiety.

Misaki-chan tapped my shoulder.

“But don’t worry. I came up with an exercise that’ll help you easily communicate with people you’re meeting for the first time. Let me tell you about it.”

“Y- Yeah..... Sure.....”

“The method is simple. We’ll go out during the day, and you’ll call out to me like we’re meeting for the first time.”

“What, is it that easy?”

“Do you think so? The reason you can communicate so easily with me now is thanks to my kind hearted support.”

“Th- That’s..... Well..... I guess you’re right.”

“But I realized that might be a problem.”

“How so?”

“We need stimulation to help you grow. Right now, we’re used to each other, right?”

“Are we? We only knew each other for a few months.”

It was just this spring that Misaki-chan and her aunt came to this apartment soliciting their religion.

However, Misaki-chan ignored me and continued.

“Really..... We’ve known each other for a while. We can only see each other from how we’re used to. That’s why.....”

“That’s why?”

“That’s why we’ll meet outside like it’s the first time. I’m sure that’s the right direction to go at.”

“.....”

“Three days from now at noon time, I’ll be at the station square. On that day, Satou-kun, I want you to call out to me.”

“Wh- Why would I.....”

“If you do this, Satou-kun, you’ll experience something you haven’t before. You’ll be able to go to a ‘new world.’ Here are your documents.”

Misaki-chan drew a map on a page of her notebook and handed it to me.

“Three days later at noon. I’ll be waiting for you on this bench.”

“I’m not going, you know. Something this troublesome is.....”

“I see. Just ‘Growth’ and a ‘Ticket to a New World,’ can’t get you moving, can it? A simple minded person like you needs a reward you can understand. Okay..... to motivate you, I’ll do you a favor..... Geez, I guess it can’t be helped.....”

Misaki-chan took the notebook page, wrote on the back with her mechanical pencil, and pushed it back to me.

“Men like this kind of thing, right?”

Before I could confirm, she ran out of Room 102 with her bag.

In the brief second she glanced at me, her face was flushed red.

“.....Geez. What the hell is she up to?”

For the time being, I checked the back of the paper.

In cute handwriting, the following was written.

“The Anything Ticket: If Satou-kun can clear this mission, I will do one thing he requests. That is the purpose of this ticket.”

“Th- The Anything Ticket.....?”

My heart started racing.

Part Two

As the sun set and my heart calmed down, Yamazaki returned from vocational school. For the time being, I shoved Misaki-chan’s sheet into my pocket and went to his room.

Even though it was early summer, I made the usual cost performance hot pot. Steam spread through the room lit by technology like his gaming PC and PS5.

In the rising humidity, we drank our Strong Zeros discussing the concept of our game.

Like discussing the fate of the world, we had a hot debate about the future of this industry.

“By the way, Yamazaki-kun..... Can I give my honest thoughts on this?”

“Of course! The team’s honesty is important in game development!”

“In the first place, aren’t we mistaken in our thoughts on game development?”

“Wh- What are you saying, Satou-san!?”

“Yamazaki-kun..... I know you can draw, compose music, and program. Hell, we might as well call you a true multimedia creator. That much, I get.”

“And your point is!?”

“My point is, I can’t even handle miscellaneous tasks. In reality, you’re the only one making this game we’re making. It’ll probably be tough.”

“You..... Where the hell are you coming off from.....?”

Yamazaki glared at me with his red face. I never wanted to say anything out of fear for his spontaneous anger. The truth that our game development would never succeed. But maybe it’s time I braved up and faced the issue head-on.

“Anyway. There’s no way we can make a decent game. You get me right? Let’s face reality.”

“Ugh... Ughhh.....”

From Yamazaki’s mouth came crying. I felt like crying too. For the time being, Yamazaki took a Strong Zero out of the fridge and poured some out.

“Want any?”

“S- Sure. I’ll drink too!”

We emptied both the pot and several of those long cans.

With a strongly radiant face, Yamazaki spoke.

“Hahaha..... It can’t be helped, can it? If it’s going to be like this, shall we just return to being consumers?”

“Ahh, yeah. Let’s spend the rest of our days without any responsibility. Any good games lately?”

“Well..... Actually, I haven’t played much.”

“Even with that game console?”

“It’s hard to get motivated..... I’ve been listening to hypnovoices before going to bed these days.”

“Hypnovoices? The hell are those?”

Yamazaki tapped DLsite.com on his laptop's keyboard and introduced me to the adult stuff.

"Hm, I see. Adult orientated stories performed by voice actresses."

"The immersion is amazing!"

"I see. Just by closing your eyes and listening to a voice, you can go to another world. It's like another kind of virtual reality!"

"Not only that..... it's easier to make a project with just voices than a game. All you need to do is record and draw a few package illustrations."

"....."

"Sa- Satou-san!"

"Ah, Ahh! That's right, this is it! Hypnovoces for adults..... Even we can make something like this!"

"B- But let's calm down and think for a second. Who will do the voices?"

"Yamazaki-kun, isn't there a voice acting department at your school? There'd be no problem if you asked some girls there."

"There is a problem! I don't have any female friends at school."

"Then for the time being, your job is making friends."

"I- I can't do that....."

"Hey, don't take creating lightly. Is that all your passion's got?"

"Fine, I'll do it. Yeah, I'll do it!" Yamazaki grabbed a Strong Zero from the fridge and drank it.

"Alright, I'll get to researching this adult hypnovoice genre."

"I'll leave it to you, Satou-san!"

That is how our story began.

Yamazaki called out to me as I was about to leave the room.

“Ah, by the way, Satou-san, I should tell you I do have a male friend at school. I’m not a complete hikikomori like you.”

“Oh, really?”

I can’t imagine too many people being able to make friends with a moody guy like Yamazaki.....

“You know rap? That thing where people say things really fast?”

“Ahh, yeah.”

“There’s this guy who’s totally into it..... It’s a completely different genre from us, but I really get his passion. Ah, right, right. I got this from him today.”

Yamazaki took something like a cigarette out of his school bag.

“What’s this, a handmade cigarette?”

“He said all rappers smoke this.”

“H- Hey! That can’t be.....”

I took the cigarette from Yamazaki’s hand and sniffed it. It smelled mysterious, like a plant I wasn’t familiar with.

“Idiot, you gotta throw this thing away!”

“Huh, didn’t think you were the type to get worried about this kind of stuff.”

“O- Of course I am! You better not smoke that. That stuff is... cannabis!”

“Hahaha, I know. But you don’t have to get so worked up.”

Yamazaki spoke at length about the good of cannabis from a cultural, scientific, and economic perspective. It seems his rapper friend sold it to him.

I stopped listening.

“Bad things are bad. I’ll throw it out.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Besides that, don’t forget about the hypnovoice research.”

I shoved the cigarette in my pocket and went back into my room.

Part Three

My smartphone vibrated in the middle of the night as I was playing a game on my futon.

It was a LINE message from Senpai.

“Are you up?”

“What is it? Yeah, I’m up.”

A brief moment later, I got a call.

“Sorry, I’m being a bother, aren’t I? I just wanted to hear your voice for a bit.....”

At that, I started talking with Senpai.

Judging from her not being able to speak clearly, she may have been drunk or under drug influence.

This might take a while.

I took a Strong Zero out of the fridge to maintain my energy listening to her.

Conversations with people with mental health issues can be uselessly dark. At the same time, they can be very alluring.

I had to be careful.

Senpai's world held the atmosphere of Thanatos and I didn't want to fall in.

While drinking and messing with my smartphone on my other hand, I continued to agree with her ramblings.

"Hey, hold on. Are you listening to me seriously? Satou-kun?"

"I- I'm listening. Work's a pain, right?"

"Geez. That's completely off. Marriage. I really don't know if I should get married like this....."

Ahh, that, huh. Well, do it if you want."

"Hey, Satou-kun..... You're playing on your smartphone, aren't you?"

"H- How did you....."

"Because I've been with you since high school. Hey, what are you looking at? If it's you, it's probably some game or matome site."

"Of course not. You know, Yamazaki and I actually started a YouTube channel. I'm managing it. I'm thinking about how to reply to this comment on our video."

"Eh, you already uploaded something? I want to see."

"No way. It's embarrassing."

Though in just a few minutes, Senpai found our YouTube channel.

"I searched your pen names from the Literature Club and they just came out."

"....."

"What, you only have one video uploaded? It's just two guys with masks on being vague. 'We'll report on our creative activities'? How lame."

"B- But, we still got a comment!"

“How’d you respond?”

“That’s..... I’ve been wondering how to respond for a week now. If I give a bad response, we’ll lose our one fan.”

“I’m surprised. I thought you were doing something new, but it’s just the same as ever. Well..... whatever. YouTube’s just another branch of Deep State anyway.”

“Deep State?”

“What, you don’t know, Satou-kun? Deep State is.....”

It seemed there was a dark organization manipulating the world from underground. Senpai explained about their conspiracy in detail.

“Your addiction to smartphones is thanks to Deep State’s conspiracy.”

“.....”

“Hahaha, I’m kidding.”

“Thank God. I thought you were serious.”

“Of course I’m kidding. A conspiracy that can be explained so casually can’t make much of a difference.”

“.....”

“What we have to be careful of is..... a less visible conspiracy. No..... Something that we can see, but don’t notice..... That’s what we need to be careful of.”

“What could that be?”

“I don’t know. How about you?”

“I- I don’t know.”

“Don’t you think it’s strange? This world, I mean.”

“That’s..... Yeah, I do think that. Nothing is fair.”

“No. Not that. More like, how do I put it..... Like things keep repeating.”

“Ahh, that, huh. I get that.”

“D- Do you, Satou-kun? What I’m talking about.”

“Of course. I mean, we’ve..... been like this since high school. Talking like this in the classroom, killing time.....”

“.....”

After a moment of silence, Senpai made a tired laugh.

“Hahaha. Yeah. We have been like this for a while, haven’t we?”

“It’s no good for us, is it?”

“Of course it’s no good. Satou-kun, you can’t stay a hikikomori forever.”

“You too, Senpai. Abusing prescription drugs is bad for your body.”

After that, we continued to badmouth each other’s lifestyles.

It wasn’t a particularly productive conversation, but we never went back to discussing Deep State’s conspiracy or any other invisible enemy.

After thirty minutes, there was a lag in Senpai’s responses.

It seemed she was falling asleep.

Senpai spoke as if half in a dream.

“Geez..... You really are useless, Satou-kun. You never change.”

“That’s not true. At the very least, I want to change.

“That’s nothing concrete..... How do you plan on changing?”

“For the time being, I have a goal.”

I turned the paper on the floor by my bedside.

“The Anything Ticket.”

This ticket has unlimited potential.

As long as I cleared this mission, Misaki-chan would do anything I say.

Right..... With the power of this ticket, I can journey into the new world.

The mission is so simple.

In three days, I just had to go to the station and call out to Misaki-chan waiting there.

“I’ll definitely journey out to the new world.”

“You’re worrying me..... Well, I don’t know what you’re going to do though.....”

Senpai’s voice became slower and slower.

“But no matter what you decide..... you’ll..... fail.”

“What do you know about me?”

“I know..... just about everything.....”

At that, Senpai fell asleep.

Just in case, I listened to her sleeping breath five minutes before hanging up.

Anyways.

No matter what Senpai said, I’d set out for the new world.

For that..... I opened my smartphone’s notepad, and made a plan on how to make the mission a success.

Part Four

When I awoke, the sun was already setting.

It was time to prepare for the nightly “Hikikomori Recovery Session” at the park.

But until the day of the mission, Misaki-chan wasn’t going to appear. I decided to go back to sleep before Yamazaki came back from school.

Sleep is the greatest joy in life and it’s no exaggeration to say I live to sleep.

But before going to sleep, I saw the notepad on my smartphone with a mysterious checklist.

“I..... I remember this. The checklist to clear the mission.”

I made this last night after my long chat with Senpai.

According to this, the first action was to never go back to sleep.

Certainly, if I went back to sleep, my rhythm for waking up would shift back by two hours. As a result, I’ll oversleep and the mission will fail. I’ll be stuck in this lonely lifestyle forever.

I can’t let that happen.

I have to change.

I used up all my mental strength to escape the futon.

But I felt bad.

At this rate, my physical condition will worsen and I’d feel sick. I should go back to sleep just a little longer.

That was when the checklist held me back.

“Drink coffee straight out of bed.”

I see. Caffeine will prevent me from going back to sleep.

What's more, on the table was a mug cup, instant coffee jar, and a spoon on the table. It was what I prepared in advance last night.

"....."

It can't be helped.

I gave up on returning to my futon, boiled water on the electric kettle, and drank while checking my phone.

"Open the curtain to bring in the sunlight."

I see. With the sunlight, my endocrine hormones will balance.

"There we go."

My legs were weak due to lack of exercise, but I managed to open the curtain with my other hand holding the mug.

"Ugh..... It's bright....."

I had to squint. The sky turned red, but it was still too much for me who just woke up. Fearing the light, I almost closed the curtains.

However, reading the next note on the checklist, I suppressed my instincts.

"Play smartphone games."

I see. I'll neutralize the sun's discomfort by playing games like usual.

While starting the soshage I've been addicted to recently, I completed the daily quest. I gradually started to wake up.

Yamazaki came back that night and we started our usual creator's meeting. In the end, we agreed hypnovoice was definitely the way to go.

"Let's do it, Satou-san!"

"Ohh, let's do this!"

We got fired up. I decided to stay the night until Yamazaki passed out. I took a Strong Zero out of his fridge.

However, the alarm I set on my phone brought me back to my sanity.

That's right, I can't stay up late.....!

It's time to get ready for bed!

To clear the mission..... And to use "The Anything Ticket" to go to the new world.....!

It was regrettable, but I left Yamazaki's room early and went to bed.

Waking up at dawn, I washed my clothes and shaved.

I checked Google Street for the bench Misaki-chan had decided on.

"Alright, perfect....."

I wiped the sweat from my forehead.

Yesterday's hard work put my nerves and sleep rhythm in place.

My physical preparations were also complete.

I can do this.....!

However, just before bed, I got another call from Senpai.

She kept going on about her business person worries.

To counter, I started talking about something needlessly long and boring.

“In other words, human beings are made up of a countless number of cells.”

“Hm.”

“And cells are made up of a countless number of molecules and atoms.”

“And?”

“Atoms are made up of the kanji 原 and 子. Kanji comes from an old Chinese dynasty.”

“Hold up, Satou-kun. You never talked about this stuff before. What’s going on?”

“Just listen to me. You’ll get it if you listen a little more.”

“Geez, it can’t be helped.”

I arranged the Chinese dynasties I remembered.

Furthermore, I told episodes of historical figures as they randomly came up. From there, we moved the topic from history to natural science.

“Space is huge. Not just wide, but there are a ton of spaces. It’s multidimensional.”

I spoke of what I could remember from the science magazine “Newton” that I skimmed at the convenience store the other night.

Senpai started to fall asleep on the other side of the phone.

Alright.....

In case, I kept the call going for another 5 minutes and hung up when I confirmed Senpai was completely knocked out.

Now..... I could concentrate on my own rest.

If I slept now, I'd definitely clear Misaki-chan's mission tomorrow. Then I can open up the gate to the new world with "The Anything Ticket."

But..... I just couldn't get sleepy.

Was it too early after all?

Or was there something keeping me awake?

Right..... I was fully physically prepared. What remained was the mental part.

For sure, what kept me up was psychological issues.

But I didn't want to search my heart, so I looked for something productive to do in the dark room.

Then, I found something.

Market research on DLsite.

I opened DLsite from my bookmarks on my smartphone, opened up adult works for "Voice/ASMR," and bought the three most popular works with what remained of my parent's money.

"Ohh....."

"Barrage of IchaLove with an Elf in Another World"

"Understanding a MesuGaki Mission"

"HotSpring Trip with My Older Sister, Younger Sister, Classmate, and a Married Woman"

The sweet voices of these titles shot into my brainstem.

"Uohhh..... Too strong.....!"

To cool down the pleasure in my melting brain, I looked for my cigarette and lighter in my mountain of trash.

I found it.

I got a light and inhaled the smoke to my chest.

“Cough, cough..... This is.....”

The hand-rolled cigarette Yamazaki got from his rapper friend the other day. This stuff's not widely used in Japan. I forgot to throw it away.

“S- Shit. I got to get rid of this.....”

Though..... it started to feel good.

Come to think of it..... John Lennon..... Steve Jobs..... and Elon Musk..... all seemed to smoke this.”

It's also known the ban has been lifted in quite a few states in America.

Moreover, while smoking and listening to adult orientated hypnovoices, I entered a state of pleasure I never felt before.

Perhaps this was the Nirvana that Siddhartha, the Prince of Shakya, was pursuing.

By the way, Nirvana is a rock band that existed in the last century, but apparently, a member became depressed and committed suicide.

Perhaps the real cause of this was adult hypnovoices did not exist at the time.

You can't safely experience this plant without the complete inner world set with, for example, “JS JC JK Complete Training Trip,” don't you think?

But this is just my own insight. I needed more solid research to realize this theory. I lit another cigarette and bought 5 more hypnovoices from DLsite.

I was out of cash this month, but I had a credit card. With the power of modern capitalism, I continued to research ways to benefit humanity with the hypnovoices cannabis combo.

I confirmed the results were positive.

This was incredible!

It was then I decided.

Someday, I'd be the creator of wonderful plant infused hypnovoices!

I swore this with JS, JC, and JK surrounding my brain.

“.....”

The sound of office workers walking in front of my apartment penetrated my room with the early morning air.

Feeling the pressure of this ruthless society, I closed the curtains, dived into the futon, and slept until night.

*

“.....”

I made a hot pot again as Yamazaki came back from school.

I heard a rumbling noise as my smartphone vibrated in my pocket.

“Sorry..... I'm going out for a sec.”

“Seriously? I'm starting without you.”

I left the apartment and headed for the park.

I ran five minutes on the night road.

At the park, on the usual bench, was the shadow of a girl under the city lights.

“You’re late. You’ll be fined a million yen if you’re not here on time for our session.”

“Haa, haa..... Sorry.”

“What for?”

“.....I couldn’t keep my promise. I couldn’t go to that new place. I’m sorry.”

“Hahaha. I knew that. That you wouldn’t come. I’m a little relieved too.”

Wearing a plain T-shirt, she spread her secret notebook on the table.

“Is this really okay?”

“Our first mission to the new world..... It might have been too early for you, Satou-kun. For a poor hikikomori living in his own world, long-term care is important.”

“Hey, listen. I don’t really want to change. I want to stay like this forever.”

“I know that. We’ve been together for a while.”

For a moment, Misaki-chan smiled in the darkness of the park.

Then, she went back to a serious face, turning around her notebook.

“I’ll repeat this lecture until you understand from the bottom of your heart. Got it?”

I nodded.

The session began.

These sessions have been going a while, so I knew what she would say before opening her mouth.

But I wanted to hear them for as long as I could, so I listened without saying a thing.

After tonight’s session, she ran back to her house on the hill.

“.....”

I returned to the apartment.

I ate the cold hot pot while looking at Yamazaki's back gaming.

During tonight's anime viewing party, the smartphone in my pocket vibrated.

“Don't forget to come to our session tomorrow.”

I sent back a sticker confirming her LINE message.